

AMENDED VERSION

IN THE CLAIMS:

4. (new) A method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said exposing step includes exposing raw meat to an atmosphere wherein the atmosphere is further defined as a volume of carbon monoxide of approximately 30% by weight of the volume of the meat being treated.

5. (new) A method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said maintaining step includes retarding pathogen growth wherein the pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *E. coli*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Listeria monocytogens*, *Clostridium perfringens*, and *Salmonella typhimurium*.

6. (new) A method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said exposing step includes exposing raw meat that is beef.

A(7. (new) A method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said exposing step includes exposing raw meat that is poultry.

8. (new) A method of inhibiting pathogen growth by exposing raw beef to an atmosphere consisting essentially of carbon monoxide and maintaining the beef in a vacuum-free, sealed container to maintain color and freshness while retarding bacterial growth, wherein the pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *E. coli*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Listeria monocytogens*, *Clostridium perfringens*, and *Salmonella typhimurium*.

9. (new) A method of inhibiting pathogen growth by exposing raw poultry to an atmosphere consisting essentially of carbon monoxide and maintaining the poultry in a vacuum-free, sealed container to maintain color and freshness while retarding bacterial growth, wherein the pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *E. coli*,

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Pseudomonas fluorescens, Staphylococcus aureus, Listeria monocytogens, Clostridium perfringens, and Salmonella typhimurium.